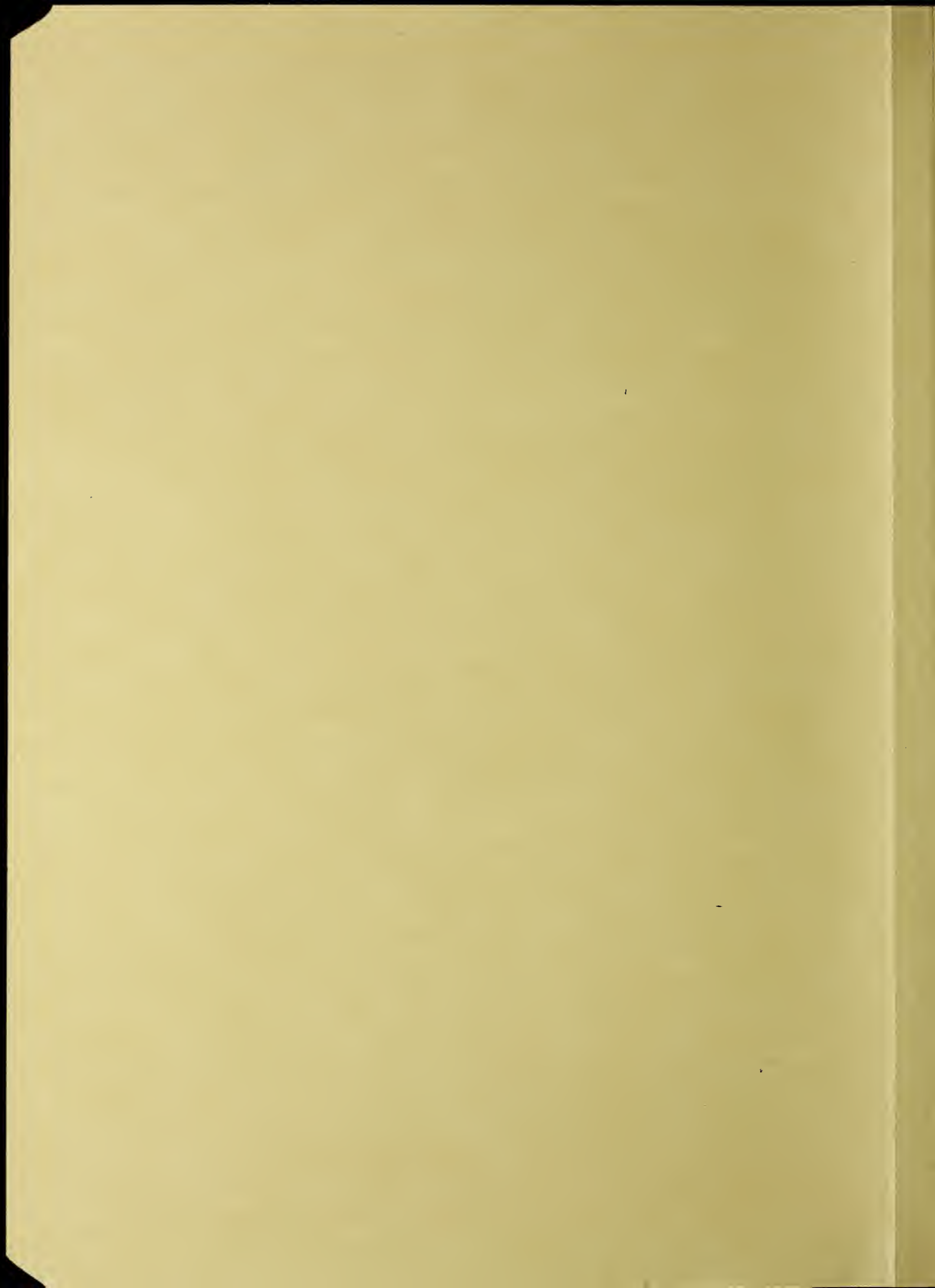


Autobiography Written for
John Locke Scripps

DRAWER 3 BIOGRAPHY

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Biographies and Stories of Abraham Lincoln

Autobiography Written for
John Locke Scripps

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S sketch of his own life is even briefer than CARL SANDBURG'S three-hundred-word biography, but it does not include the period of "greatest stress and strain," of which President HOOVER, in the figure of an engineer, spoke from the room where LINCOLN for five years toiled with "patience, under-standing steadfastness, genius and "courage." Moreover, the autobiography relates almost wholly to LINCOLN'S own education as if that were the thing essential in his career. He told it in the third person, as follows:

Before leaving Kentucky, ABRAHAM and his sister were sent for short periods to A B C Schools, the first kept by ZECHARIAH RINEY and by CALEB HAZEL.

While here [Spencer County, Ind., to which place his father migrated when ABRAHAM was 7 years old] ABRAHAM went to A B C Schools by littles kept successively by ANDREW CRAWFORD, — SWEENEY and AZEL W. DORSEY. He does not remember any other. ABRAHAM now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to a year. He was never in a college or academy as a student and never inside of a college or academy building till since he had a law license. What he has in the way of an education, he picked up After he was 23 and had separated from his father, he studied English grammar — imperfectly of course, but so as to speak and write as well as he now does. He studied and nearly mastered the six books of EUCLID since he was a member of Congress. He regrets his want of an education and does what he can to supply the want.

In the Congressional Directory he condensed this story of his education to one word—"defective." But, however deficient his formal schooling was (and HENRY ADAMS, seeing him for the first time as President, said that no man living needed an education more than he), his education, continued beyond the Euclidian studies through life, was such that colleges and universities would be happy to find its curriculum. He kept on "supplying the want."

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MY ANCESTORS—A. LINCOLN

My grandfather's christian name was Abraham. He had four brothers: Isaac, Jacob, John, and Thomas. They were born in Pennsylvania and came from Berks (County). The lineage has been traced no farther back than this. An effort to identify them with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity of christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham, and the like. The family were originally Quakers though in later times they have fallen from the peculiar habits of that people.¹

Grandfather and some if not all the others in early life removed to Rockingham County, Virginia. So far as known the descendants of Jacob and John are still in Virginia. Isaac went to a place where Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee join and his descendants are still in that region. Thomas came to Kentucky to Fayette County, I think, where as I understand, after many years he died, whence his descendants went to Missouri.

I remember a long time ago seeing Austin and Davis Lincoln said to be sons of Hannaniel or Hannaneal Lincoln who was said to have been cousin of my grandfather.

My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Virginia, to Kentucky, about 1781 or 2, where a year or two later, he was killed by Indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest.² The story of his death and of Uncle Mordecai, then fourteen years old, killing one of the Indians is the legend more strongly than all others imprinted upon my mind and memory. Grandfather left a widow, three sons and two daughters. His family resided in Washington County, Kentucky.

The eldest son, Mordecai, remained in Kentucky till late in life when he removed to Hancock County, Illinois, where soon after he died and where several of his descendants still remain. My Uncle Mordecai had three sons: Abraham, James, and Mordecai. His two sons there now (1848) are Abraham and Mordecai and their post office is La Harpe.

The second son, Josiah, farther back than my recollection went from Kentucky to a place on Blue River, now within Hancock County, Indiana. I have not heard from him in a great many years and whether he is now living I cannot say. My recollection of what I have heard is that he has several daughters and only one son, Thomas. Their post office is Corydon, Harrison County, Kentucky. I often saw Uncle Mordecai, and Uncle Josiah but once in my life, but I never resided near either of them.

The eldest sister, Mary, married Ralph Crume in Washington County, Kentucky, and some of her descendants are known to be in Breckinridge County, Kentucky. The second sister, Nancy, married William Brumfield and her family are not known to have left Kentucky.

Thomas, my father, the youngest son, was born in Rockingham County, Virginia. By the very early death of his father and the very narrow circumstances of his mother, even in childhood he was a wandering laboring

boy, and grew up literally without an education. He never did more than to bunglingly write his own name. Before he was grown he passed one year as a hired hand with his Uncle Isaac on Watauga, a branch of the Holston River. I have often heard my father speak of his Uncle Isaac residing at Watauga. Getting back into Kentucky and having reached his twenty-eighth year he married Nancy Hanks in the year 1806. She was also born in Virginia; and relatives of hers by the name of Hanks and of other names now reside in Coles, in Macon, and in Adams County, Illinois, also in Adams County, Iowa. John Hanks who now engineers the "rail enterprise" at Decatur is a first cousin of my mother. My parents were of undistinguished or second families perhaps I should say.

Father removed to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in the Autumn of 1816. The removal was partly on account of slavery but chiefly on account of difficulty with land titles in Kentucky. In the Autumn of 1818, on October 5, my mother died.

A year afterwards my father married Mrs. Sally Johnston at Elizabethtown, Kentucky, a widow with three children of her first marriage. She proved a good and kind mother to me. There were no children of this second marriage. My father's residence continued in the same place in Indiana until 1830.

March 1, 1830, my father and family, with the families of the two daughters and sons-in-law of my stepmother, left the old homestead in Indiana and came to Illinois. Our mode of conveyance was wagons drawn by ox-teams and I drove one of the teams. We reached the County of Macon, and stopped there some time within the month of March. My father and family settled a new place on the north side of the Sangamon River, at the junction of the timberland and the prairie, about ten miles westerly from Decatur.

The sons-in-law were temporarily settled in other places in the county. In the autumn all hands were greatly afflicted with ague and fever to which they had not been used and by which they were greatly discouraged, so much so that they determined on leaving the county. They remained, however, through the succeeding winter of the very celebrated "deep snow" of Illinois.

My father with his own family and others mentioned, had, in pursuance to their intention, removed from Macon to Coles County. He is still living in Coles County, Illinois, being in the seventy-first year of his age (1848). His post office is Charleston, Coles County, Illinois.³

1. The Berks County Lincolns now are known to have been descendants of the New England Lincolns.

2. Duly authorized records now establish grandfather Lincoln's death in 1786.

3. Thomas Lincoln died January, 1851.

Editor's Note—This number of Lincoln Lore contains the first of a series of autobiographical sketches compiled from the writings of Abraham Lincoln which will appear from time to time in this bulletin. Every word used is just as Lincoln wrote it with the exception of substituting the first person for the third person as used by Lincoln in the sketches he prepared for John L. Scripps in 1859. L. A. W.



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